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Speech from  
the Throne  
to Open  
the Second Session  
of the Thirty-Sixth  
Parliament of Canada  
October 12, 1999

# **Building a Higher Quality of Life for All Canadians**

**Canada** 

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**Honourable Members of the Senate,  
Members of the House of Commons,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is an honour for me, today, to open this Second Session of the Thirty-Sixth Parliament of Canada. I appreciate having the opportunity so early in my mandate to represent the Queen as one of the three elements of Parliament. It is a responsibility which I take seriously, and I intend to follow your deliberations closely.

Unlike my immediate predecessors, I have not had the privilege of serving among you. I do, however, value highly the role that you play and the dedication that you show in making this remarkable institution work effectively as the centrepiece of the Canadian democratic system. I am very aware of the sacrifices that so many of you make in your personal and professional lives in accepting the challenges of public office. The commitment you have made is one that I share, and I look forward to working with you over the next five years in the service of the people of Canada.

Today, the representatives of the Canadian people gather to open the session of Parliament that will carry the country into the new millennium.

We stand before a new century confident in the promise of Canada for our children and grandchildren. Technology is altering every aspect of our lives. Knowledge and creativity are now the driving force in a new economy. And collaboration is becoming more essential as the issues facing our diverse society grow in their complexity. But Canadians will succeed in this changing world, just as we have succeeded throughout our country's history.

The promise of Canada was born in an age when countries were forged through war or revolution. Our nation's founders chose a unique path, which has become the Canadian way – creating a country dedicated to peace, order and good government for all its citizens. It took foresight and commitment to break the mould of the nation-state founded on a single language, culture or religion. That foresight and commitment have been greatly rewarded.

Canada began as a small colony with little industry and no role of its own in global affairs. Over generations, individual Canadians built a better future for their families and their communities. Canadians and their governments overcame barriers of distance and a harsh northern climate to build a national railway, a system of highways, a postal service, and national cultural institutions, as well as hospitals, universities, and other institutions. Canadians and their governments also put in place a modern social safety net. Together, these achievements have provided the foundation for our quality of life.

Within a few generations, we evolved into an independent nation with an advanced industrialized economy and a voice in the councils of the world: the United Nations, the G-8, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, NATO, and many others. Canada is now serving its sixth elected term on the United Nations Security Council.

Ours is a voice for peace. Canada was the first to propose the use of troops for peacekeeping. Today, Canadians are keeping the peace in many countries around the world. But whenever tyranny has threatened peace and security, Canadians have never hesitated to answer the call. Together with our proud Canadian veterans, we remember those who paid with their lives at Vimy Ridge, on Juno Beach, and at Hill 355 in Korea.

In the tradition of the **coureurs des bois**, we have explored the frontiers of science. From the invention of newsprint to the creation of advanced computer languages, Canadian ingenuity has helped to build the information age. From the discovery of insulin to the earliest pacemaker, Canadians have given new life to millions around the world. Canada was a pioneer in the peaceful use of space, becoming a leader in satellite communications and remote-sensing technologies. Today, our astronauts are using Canadian technology to help assemble the International Space Station – the largest scientific project in history.

In a complex world, diverse approaches, skills and ideas are essential to building a higher quality of life. Canada is a bilingual country in which both men and women of many different cultures, races and religions participate in economic, social and political life. Our diversity is a source of strength and creativity, making us modern and forward-looking.

Our actions and our history make us at home in a world of change and increasing interdependence. Our human talent, our values and our commitment to working together will secure Canada's leadership in the knowledge-based economy.

Today, Canadians can look with pride on Canada's success. We have a dynamic economy, a strong and democratic society, and a sense of community. We are recognized throughout the world for our quality of life. We will build a higher quality of life for all Canadians – for our children, ourselves, and our neighbours.

# A Strong and United Canada

A high quality of life for Canadians and a strong, united Canada are inseparable. The Government will continue to take a comprehensive approach to strengthening the unity of our country. All its actions will serve to strengthen Canada by enhancing the quality of life of Canadians.

Our federal system allows us to value the different strengths of each region of our country. It guarantees all citizens equal rights and freedoms. And it enables Canada's wealth to be shared by all citizens no matter where they live – from Newfoundland in the east, to British Columbia in the west, to our newest territory, Nunavut, in the north.

Over the last two Parliaments, Canadians have built a foundation for even greater success. Our economy is strong. Our citizens enjoy expanding opportunities and increasing choices. Our artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers draw admiration from around the world. And Canada itself earns the respect of the community of nations as a symbol of peace, democracy and compassion.

The best way to achieve the promise of Canada for every citizen is to work together to build the highest quality of life for all Canadians. But there are some who would pull us apart rather than bring us together. Even though Quebecers do not want a third referendum, the Government of Quebec continues to talk about holding another one. The Government of Canada therefore reaffirms the commitment it has made to Quebecers and all other Canadians that the principle of clarity, as set out by the Supreme Court of Canada, will be respected.

To seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of a new global economy, we must work together in the Canadian way and concentrate on what matters most to Canadians. We must take bold steps today to make Canada even stronger in the next century. This requires national will, national strategies and partnerships across the country. Citizens and governments must collaboratively build an even stronger and more united Canada, a Canada that remains an example to the world.

Canadians expect their national government to focus on areas where it can and must make a difference. And they want this done in the Canadian way – working together, balancing individual and government action, and listening to citizens. Canadians expect their Government to be fiscally prudent, to reduce the debt burden, to cut taxes, and to pursue the policies necessary for a strong society. The emerging global marketplace offers an enormous opportunity to create more Canadian jobs, more Canadian growth and more Canadian influence in the world. It provides expanding opportunities to secure a higher quality of life for all Canadians. To seize these opportunities, we must build on our strengths.

Achieving a higher quality of life requires a comprehensive strategy to accelerate the transition to the knowledge-based economy, promote our interests and project our values in the world. Together, we will strive for excellence. This demands that we collaborate with our partners to:

- develop our children and youth, our leaders for the 21st century;
- build a dynamic economy;
- strengthen health and quality care for Canadians;

- ensure the quality of our environment;
- build stronger communities;
- strengthen the relationship with Canada's Aboriginal peoples; and
- advance Canada's place in the world.

## **Children and Youth: Our Leaders for the 21st Century**

### **Our Children**

Because of the changing nature of the world economy, the prospects for a high quality of life in any country will depend – as never before – on having a population that is adaptable, resilient and ready to learn throughout life. The foundation for this is laid in the very early years. No commitment we make today will be more important for the long-term prosperity and well-being of our society than the commitment to invest our efforts in very young children. Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the care of their children. But all of society must work together to ensure that our children develop the abilities to succeed.

The Government will extend and make more accessible Employment Insurance benefits for parental leave, to help parents take more time from work to spend with their children. It will make its own workplace policies and those of federally regulated employers more family friendly. Through further tax relief, it will put more dollars in the hands of families with children. And, with its provincial and territorial partners, it will work to reform family law and strengthen supports provided to

families to ensure that, in cases of separation or divorce, the needs and best interests of children come first.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments are developing together the National Children's Agenda. As part of this work, it is the Government's objective to reach an agreement among governments by December 2000 on a national action plan to further support parents and families. This plan will be consistent with the Social Union Framework Agreement. It will set out common principles, objectives and fiscal parameters for all governments to increase resources and further strengthen supports for early childhood development.

To make it easier for families to break the cycle of poverty, the federal, provincial and territorial governments also established the National Child Benefit. The Government of Canada is already investing an additional \$1.7 billion annually in low-income families with children, while the provinces and territories are investing in complementary services. The Government wants no family to have to choose between a job and benefits for their children. Therefore, by 2002, the Government will make a third significant investment in the National Child Benefit, while seeking a commitment from its provincial and territorial partners to increase their investment in services for families with children.

## **Young Canadians**

Young Canadians are the leaders of tomorrow. Already, they are at home in the wired world. They have energy, ideas and technological savvy, and they want to contribute to building their country in the 21st century. In our global and connected world, young Canadians are acquiring knowledge and skills at an

earlier age. They deserve more and earlier opportunities to get involved, develop their talents and expand their skills. In doing so, they will become active and engaged citizens.

The Government will focus on providing young people with more opportunities to connect to the Canadian experience, to view their country in all its splendour, to gain a first-hand understanding of the different regions, and to be challenged by what they learn from their fellow citizens across this land. The Government will:

- draw on the expertise of young Canadians to help connect rural and urban communities to the information highway, by hiring them to put in place additional Internet access sites for public use;
- create a single-window service – Exchanges Canada – to give 100,000 young Canadians every year the chance to learn about another part of the country;
- ensure that younger Canadians – from age 13 – are given an opportunity to apply their creative abilities, by providing them with a chance to produce their “first works” using traditional approaches and new technologies in the arts, cultural, digital and other industries;
- actively engage tens of thousands of young Canadian volunteers to participate in community and national environmental projects and to help others improve their literacy skills; and
- enable young Canadians to apply their energy and talents overseas, by participating in international internship programs and helping developing countries get connected to the Internet.

In addition, the Government will continue to place a priority on providing young Canadians with career information, access to work experience, and learning opportunities.

# A Dynamic Economy for the 21st Century

In the global, knowledge-based economy, the advantage goes to countries that are innovative, have high levels of productivity, quickly adopt the latest technology, invest in skills development for their citizens, and seek out new opportunities around the world.

Canadians have built a strong and dynamic economy. It is the cornerstone of our quality of life – providing Canada with the means to continue building a more equitable society, a healthier population, and stronger communities. In the space of only a few years, our nation's finances have gone from deficits and debt to balanced budgets, with low inflation and low interest rates. Laws and regulations have been modernized and the role of government in business decisions has been reduced.

The Government will continue to build a better environment for economic growth and enhanced productivity by reducing the debt burden, cutting taxes, and making strategic investments. Such investments will help small businesses grow, encourage trade, support citizens in developing the skills they need, and ensure that Canada has modern infrastructure.

The Government is committed to prudent fiscal management. It will never let the nation's finances get out of control again. It will keep the ratio of debt to GDP on a permanent downward track. It will deliver on the commitment it made at the beginning of this Parliament to devote half the budget surplus to debt repayment and tax relief, and the other half to investments that address the social and economic needs of Canadians.

## **Lower Taxes**

As the nation's finances have improved, the Government has begun to deliver broad-based tax relief – totalling \$16.5 billion over three years. As the nation's finances continue to improve, the Government will further reduce taxes to increase the disposable income of Canadians, enhance innovation and risk taking, and create a more robust economy.

Tax reduction is a key component of a strategy to increase individual incomes and to ensure an economy that produces the growth and wealth which enable those public and private investments necessary for a high quality of life.

In its next budget, the Government will set out a multi-year plan for further tax reduction.

## **Increased Trade and Investment**

Canada's economy is more open than any of the leading industrialized countries. We are blessed with a population that comes from countries all over the world. Foreign markets for our goods and services provide us with new opportunities. Foreign investment provides us with capital, new ideas, new technologies, and innovative business practices.

To build on Canada's advantage, the Government will increase its trade promotion in strategic sectors with high export potential – sectors ranging from biotechnology and environmental and information technology to tourism, culture and health. It will also continue to support innovation and the development of new

technologies in leading export sectors such as agriculture, agrifood and natural resources.

It will launch Investment Team Canada – a co-ordinated effort by all governments and the private sector to make the international community more aware of the unique opportunities for investment and growth in Canada. The Government will also modernize legislation to make it easier for global corporations to locate their headquarters in Canada.

The Government will use the upcoming round of World Trade Organization negotiations, including those on agriculture, to help build a more transparent, rules-based global trading system – one that ensures a level playing field, provides better access to world markets for Canadian companies in all sectors, and respects the needs of Canadians, our culture, and the environment. In addition, the Government will work with its partners in the hemisphere toward the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005.

## **Skills and Knowledge for the 21st Century**

A skilled workforce and a capacity to innovate continuously are crucial building blocks of a successful 21st century economy.

Over the last three years, the Government has put in place a strategy to build on Canada's advantage as the country with the most highly educated workforce in the world. It has made it easier to save for a child's education. It will make college and university more affordable through Canada Millennium Scholarships. It has improved student debt relief and provided better tax assistance to finance lifelong learning.

We will continue to build on this strategy. The Government will forge partnerships with other governments, public- and private-sector organizations, and Canadian men and women to establish a national action plan on skills and learning for the 21st century. This plan will focus on lifelong learning, address the challenge of poor literacy among adults, and provide citizens with the information they need to make good decisions about developing their skills.

Over the next two years, the Government will work with its partners to:

- enable skills development to keep pace with the evolving economy. This work will be led by the Sectoral Councils, which bring together representatives from business, labour, education and other professional groups to address human resource issues in important areas of the Canadian economy;
- make it easier for Canadians to finance lifelong learning; and
- provide a single window to Canada-wide information about labour markets, skills requirements and training opportunities – on the Internet, over the telephone or in person in communities across the country.

To ensure that the Public Service of Canada remains a strong, representative, professional and non-partisan national institution that provides Canadians the highest quality service into the 21st century, the Government will also focus on the recruitment, retention and continuous learning of a skilled federal workforce.

# **Infrastructure for the 21st Century**

For Canada to generate jobs, growth and wealth, it must have a leading, knowledge-based economy that creates new ideas and puts them to work for Canadians. To do this, it is essential to connect Canadians to each other, to schools and libraries, to governments, and to the marketplace – so they can build on each other's ideas and share information. Achieving this objective will require new types of infrastructure.

## **Knowledge Infrastructure**

Improving Canada's knowledge infrastructure means supporting a new generation of leaders, attracting the best researchers, and encouraging our graduates to put their talents to work here at home.

The Government will introduce the legislation necessary to create the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. These institutes will provide a model for world-leading research, bringing together for the first time all the researchers who have an impact on health to undertake shared research priorities. This innovative approach recognizes the importance of collaborative research for improving the health and well-being of Canadians and for building a high-quality health system.

The Government of Canada has for many years been one of the most important contributors to research at Canadian universities. In the last two years, the Government has pursued an ambitious agenda to improve its support for advanced research in Canada. To build on this agenda, the Government will:

- increase its support to the Granting Councils, enabling them to forge new partnerships with our universities to attract the best research minds in the world through an innovative program of 21st Century Chairs for Research Excellence;
- foster greater international research collaboration by Canadian universities and institutes and expand Canadian expertise in such areas as genomics, climate change, and advanced engineering; and
- find new markets for new products and services developed through research by universities and government research centres.

The Government will also ensure that it has a modern and effective research and science capacity to promote the health, safety and economic well-being of Canadians.

## **Information Infrastructure**

Improving Canada's information infrastructure will support the exchange of ideas and the conduct of business over computer networks, connect Canadians to the information highway, and accelerate the adoption of electronic commerce. The Government will:

- take steps to make Canada a centre of excellence for electronic commerce and encourage its use throughout the economy;
- re-introduce legislation to protect personal and business information in the digital world and to recognize electronic signatures; and
- provide increased access to high-speed Internet service for classrooms and libraries and stimulate the production of

Canadian multimedia learning content and applications. This will build on the success of SchoolNet.

The Government will become a model user of information technology and the Internet. By 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing. We will build on a pilot project now under way to make **www.access.ca** a personal gateway to government information and community content on the Internet, and we will encourage all Canadians to make use of this address.

Our knowledge-based economy is more than high-tech companies. It is an economy in which all sectors strive to use leading technologies and processes. It is an economy in which old barriers to access or of distance matter less – where technology enables urban and rural communities from the Atlantic to the West to the North to compete globally, and where technology opens new doors to all Canadians. It is an economy in which rural Canada also benefits from value-added activity, environmentally astute land management, and new job skills and opportunities. It is an economy in which clusters of technology development already exist in smaller communities all over Canada. Indeed, it is an economy in which technology can lead to greater economic stability for the primarily rural regions in which cyclical resource industries – agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and tourism – are the dominant sources of wealth. The Government will encourage the development and adoption of new technologies in all sectors.

## **Cultural Infrastructure**

The strength of Canada is reflected in its rich diversity. Across this country, Canada's culture comes alive through our writers, singers and performers, through our filmmakers and artists, and through those who chronicle our history and preserve our heritage.

New technologies offer new opportunities to strengthen the bonds between Canadians. The Government will bring Canadian culture into the digital age, linking 1,000 institutions across the country to form a virtual museum of Canada. It will put collections from the National Archives, National Library and other key institutions on-line. It will also increase support for the production of Canadian stories and images in print, theatre, film, music and video. In particular, it will increase support for the use of new media.

## **Physical Infrastructure**

Canada must also continue to improve its physical infrastructure for the 21st century. To increase trade and economic growth, we must ensure that we have the capacity to move people and goods safely and efficiently. To maintain the quality of life in our cities and rural communities, we must ensure that we have clean air and water.

The Government will work with other levels of government and the private sector to reach – by the end of the year 2000 – agreement on a five-year plan for improving physical infrastructure in urban and rural regions across the country. This agreement will set out shared principles, objectives and fiscal parameters for all partners to increase their resources directed toward

infrastructure. It will focus on areas such as transport, tourism, telecommunications, culture, health and safety, and the environment.

## **Health and Quality Care for Canadians**

Good health and quality care are essential to the well-being of all Canadians and are part of our strength in today's global marketplace. Advances in technology, research and information are opening tremendous new opportunities for improving the health and well-being of citizens.

Canadians expect their governments to work together to ensure that Canada's health care system is modern and sustainable. The Government recently reaffirmed its commitment to medicare by investing an additional \$11.5 billion to modernize the health system for the beginning of the 21st century. The Government will continue to move forward with its provincial and territorial partners and the health care community on common priorities.

With its partners, the Government will support the testing of innovations in integrated service delivery in areas such as home care and pharmacare, working toward a health system in which all parts operate seamlessly. As the results of these innovations become available, we will be better able to make informed decisions about the next significant investments in health – ensuring that our health system meets the evolving needs of all Canadians.

A modern health information system will give health professionals and individual citizens improved access to up-to-date information about health issues and treatment options. The Government will ensure that citizens in every region of the country have access to such information so they can make better-informed decisions.

The Government will protect the health of Canadians by strengthening Canada's food safety program, by taking further action on environmental health issues, including the potential health risks presented by pesticides, and by modernizing overall health protection for a changing world.

We will also continue to address the serious health problems in Aboriginal communities, supporting their efforts to promote wellness and to strengthen the delivery of health services.

## **The Quality of Our Environment**

The long-term economic and social well-being of every Canadian depends on the state of our natural environment. Canada's ability to adopt innovative environmental practices and technologies will increasingly be part of Canada's strength in the 21st century.

Canadians have long recognized the underlying relationship between a healthy environment and a high quality of life. Canadians and leading businesses are already working in their own communities to preserve the natural environment, pushing the frontiers and opportunities of environmental technologies and new eco-efficient practices.

The quality of the environment in our communities is also linked to the environmental health of other communities around the world. Problems such as climate change and dangerous levels of persistent toxins can be resolved only through concerted international action.

Within Canada, the Government will work with other governments and citizens to meet our country's commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will set and enforce tough pollution standards, in particular to better protect the health of children, seniors and residents of the North. It will place greater emphasis on sustainable development in government decision making. It will also address the structural weaknesses that have been identified in the management of toxic substances. Internationally, Canada will provide technical assistance to developing countries in adopting sustainable practices.

The Government will introduce legislation and stewardship programs, working with provinces and territories to ensure that species at risk and their critical natural habitat are protected. The Government will also continue to extend Canada's national parks system.

In its own operations, the Government will make itself a model of environmental excellence. It will do more to clean up contaminated federal sites. It will strengthen its capacity for conducting environmental science research. It will also explore new environmental clean-up technologies.

The Government will report regularly on the results achieved in addressing the top environmental concerns of Canadians.

# **Building Stronger Communities**

## **Working Together**

Our history has been one of Canadians helping Canadians to seize opportunities and rise to challenges. This commitment to working together – by Canadians, their governments and their communities – will ensure Canada's continued success in addressing the complex issues of the 21st century.

The Social Union Framework Agreement, reached earlier this year, is a commitment by governments to work together for Canadians. It calls for governments to report publicly on the effectiveness of social programs. It also commits governments to eliminating barriers that unjustifiably impede the mobility of citizens within Canada. These barriers include rules that prevent some citizens from obtaining recognition of their qualifications when they move to another province, that deny some students use of their student loans when they study out-of-province, and that restrict access to essential services for some citizens – including those with disabilities – because of their province of origin. The Government of Canada is committed to working together with its partners to meet the deadlines set out in the Social Union Framework Agreement, thereby removing all unjustifiable barriers to mobility no later than 2002.

In 2001, Canadians will mark the International Year of Volunteers – a time to celebrate the achievements of Canada's everyday heroes. The Government recognizes the need to build partnerships with communities and to renew its relationship with the voluntary organizations that serve and sustain them. The Government will enter into a national accord with the voluntary

sector, laying a new foundation for active partnership with voluntary organizations in the service of Canadians.

Strong communities depend on the participation of all their members. To this end, the Government will pursue its efforts with other governments, the private and voluntary sectors, and all citizens to build communities in which Canadians with disabilities are fully included and in which new Canadians feel more at home.

In addition, the Government will continue working with its partners in all sectors to address the root causes of homelessness and help communities respond to their members' needs for shelter and other support.

## Promoting Safer Communities

Canadians are justifiably proud of having built communities where citizens feel safe. This is a key component of our quality of life and a contributor to Canada's comparative advantage.

The Government will work with Canadians to ensure that our communities continue to be safe. Its focus will be balanced, combining prevention and a community-centred approach with action to deal with serious crime. It will expand the community-based crime prevention strategy and re-introduce legislation to reform the youth justice system. The Government will combat drug trafficking while helping communities aid those most affected. It will also launch a program of restorative justice to help victims overcome the trauma of crime and provide non-violent offenders with a chance to help repair the damage caused by their actions.

The Government will focus attention on new and emerging threats to Canadians and their neighbours around the world. It will work to combat criminal activity that is becoming increasingly global in scope, including money laundering, terrorism, and the smuggling of people, drugs and guns.

The Government will strengthen the capacity of the RCMP and other agencies to address threats to public security in Canada and work with enforcement agencies in other countries. In addition, it will work to modernize legislation to better ensure public security.

The Government of Canada will also continue to work closely with the Government of the United States to modernize our shared border for the 21st century.

## A Stronger Relationship with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples

The contribution of Canada's Aboriginal peoples has shaped our country's heritage and will continue to enrich Canada in the new century. The Government will continue to build on the strong foundation of reconciliation and renewal created by **Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan**.

We are now building stronger partnerships with Aboriginal people – concentrating on improving their living conditions and, increasingly, on strengthening their economies. As a result, Aboriginal people will be able to more fully participate in and contribute to Canada's economic development and social well-being.

Fostering good government and strong accountability in First Nations communities will increase investor confidence, support economic partnerships, and improve living conditions. Land claim agreements, in particular, are essential to create certainty for Aboriginal people and their surrounding communities – providing the climate needed for partnerships, investments and economic opportunities. Early in the new session of Parliament, the Government will introduce legislation to implement the historic agreement with the Nisga'a.

## **Canada's Place in the World**

As we move into the 21st century, Canada has the momentum to lead the way toward a safer and more secure world. Canadians have built the highest quality of life in the world by focussing on the needs of people. We have the expertise to advance an agenda of human security – protecting people from threats to their rights, their safety and their lives.

Canada is an outward-looking country, with a trade-oriented economy and a population drawn from every corner of the globe. We have a reputation internationally for making a difference – through our contribution to eliminating landmines, our work with NATO and the United Nations in Kosovo, our development assistance to Asia and Africa, our efforts to establish the International Criminal Court, and our work to renew the international financial system.

As the Cold War recedes into the past, there is a greater need to complement national security with an approach that addresses the growing challenges that undermine the security of individuals.

Human security is challenged when children are used as soldiers in combat, when citizens are denied their rights, when civilians are caught in conflict, and when people are the victims of economic crisis, natural disaster, widespread disease, or environmental degradation.

Canadians recognize that their quality of life depends in part on the quality of life of their neighbours – those who share this planet with us. A world where people are secure is a world where fewer people are forced to flee their homes, where there is less crime and terrorism, and where there is a reduced threat of disease and pollution.

The Government will give increased prominence to human security in its foreign policy, working to achieve meaningful progress in the councils of the world on a global human security agenda.

In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a special session on children. In the spirit of partnership that led to the historic treaty banning landmines, the Government will work to reach key international agreements to protect the rights of children. Canada will champion efforts to eliminate the exploitation of children, including the use of child soldiers in armed conflict, and will help address the crisis of children affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Government will act with like-minded countries to reform and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization. It will also work to develop a new approach internationally to support the diversity of cultural expression in countries around the world.

To advance Canada's leadership in the Arctic region, the Government will outline a foreign policy for the North that enhances co-operation, helps protect the environment, promotes trade and investment, and supports the security of the region's people.

The Government will increase international development assistance and work in innovative ways to enable poor countries to improve the quality of life of their citizens.

The Government will also continue to ensure that the Canadian Forces have the capacity to support Canada's role in building a more secure world and will further develop the capacity of Canadians to help ensure peace and security in foreign lands.

## **Honouring Canada's Promise for the 21st Century**

As we prepare to celebrate the turn of the millennium, we can look to our past with pride and to our future with confidence. Like previous generations, we will face new challenges. But guided by our values and our collective experience, we can ensure that Canada remains the best place in the world in which to live – the best place to raise children, to learn, to pursue opportunity, to share in rich, diverse and safe communities, and to admire the beauty of nature.

All Canadians – every citizen, every government, every business and every community organization – have a part to play. We will build the 21st century together.

## **Members of the House of Commons:**

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

## **Honourable Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Commons:**

As the representatives of the Canadian people across this great land, yours is a special duty – a higher responsibility to strive for excellence in the service of your country.

Let the Canadians of tomorrow look upon this Parliament and say, Here were men and women committed to building a stronger Canada and a better quality of life for their children and grandchildren.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

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